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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: IS\_KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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11. Mideast

12. Iraq

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Key stories in the media:  
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Israel Radio reported that Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman met this morning with PM Sharon, who updated him on current security contacts with the Palestinians and the upcoming Sharon-Abbas meeting. The radio reported that Suleiman handed over to Sharon an invitation from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to a summit with him and Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) next Tuesday in Sharm el-Sheikh. Sharon accepted Mubarak's invitation.

Israel Radio quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying Tuesday [in an interview with Reuters and AFP] that the U.S. could help equip and train PA security forces, and that the U.S. views the issue of reforms in the PA as very important. Secretary Rice also said that Israel has responsibility toward the Palestinians, notably as regards their mobility. Ha'aretz reported that senior GOI officials are feeling less than enthusiastic about Secretary Rice's upcoming visit to Israel, fearing that the American involvement might "raise the price" the Palestinians will demand of Israel. The newspaper quoted a GOI source as saying that "Rice knows this and won't let it happen." Jerusalem Post quoted a diplomatic official as saying that Secretary Rice is not expected to lay a wreath at Yasser Arafat's grave.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel and the Palestinians have agreed to set up a joint committee to deal with the cases of wanted men after a cease-fire is formally announced. The committee is to meet for the first time next week. According to the emerging agreements on both Gaza and the West Bank, Israel will agree not to harm wanted men who hand in their weapons to the PA, sign a commitment not to get involved any more in terror, remain in their home towns, and agree to monitoring by the PA security apparatus. Ha'aretz recommends that those "with blood on their hands" not be included. Leading media reported that Egypt will likely host a high-level meeting in Cairo in the coming days with Palestinian officials and Hamas heads to finalize a cease-fire agreement. Yediot quoted Abbas as saying in Moscow on Tuesday that there were flaws in Arafat's policy. Jerusalem Post quoted senior PA officials in Ramallah as saying Tuesday that a sharp dispute between Abbas and Palestinian PM Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala) is preventing the formation of a new cabinet. Leading media reported that the government coalition does not have a majority in the Knesset's Finance Committee this week for the evacuation-compensation bill, which enables the planned disengagement. Hatzofe (lead story) expects the government to allow evacuees to move to existing settlements in the West Bank, but not to encourage them to do so. Ha'aretz reported that 38 families from two Gaza Strip settlements signed an agreement in principle on Tuesday that will see them move to a farming community near Ashkelon. Jerusalem Post reported that Zvi Hendel, chairman of the National Union Party and the only Knesset member living in the Gaza Strip's Katif Bloc, has quietly appointed a legal team to investigate the feasibility of moving several settlements, including his own, to beachfront property inside the Green Line.

Yediot reported that FM Silvan Shalom met with Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Davos, Switzerland, over the weekend. Erdogan offered to host an Israeli-Palestinian summit in Istanbul. Leading media reported that both Abbas and IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon arrived in Ankara on Tuesday for separate talks

Maariv (Ben Caspit) reported that Iran has invited Abbas to Tehran. The newspaper says that it is unclear whether the Iranian leaders have changed their minds regarding the Palestinians' moderation, or if they intend to pressure Abbas to cool down his relations with Israel. All media quoted IDF Intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Aharon Zeevi-Farkash as saying Tuesday before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the "axis of evil" consisting of Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards is determined to prevent Abbas from achieving calm in the territories. Zeevi-Farkash also said that Russia could supply Syria with ground-to-air "Puncher" (phon.) missiles within two years.

All media reported that Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz has canceled a June 2004 government decision made by two ministers to apply the absentee property law to sizeable tracts of Palestinian property in East Jerusalem.

Leading media reported that the Palestinians have started investigating the possible involvement of a Palestinian gunman in the death of a 10-year-old Palestinian girl in Rafah on Monday. This is the first probe of this kind.

Ha'aretz cited the IDF's Civil Administration that the settlers are proceeding with construction in illegal outposts in the West Bank, even those earmarked for evacuation. According to the IDF, the settlers have built new structures in four outposts awaiting evacuation.

Israel Radio reported that the State Department has asked the Knesset's Committee for Foreign Workers for information on possible trafficking in persons.

Leading media reported that Tuesday the Rafah border crossing with Egypt was re-opened for business.

Yediot cited Israel's concern that the EU could remove Hamas from its list of terrorist organizations.

All media reported on German President Horst Koehler's visit to Israel.

Ha'aretz notes that Israel was not invited to the Cairo Book Fair that opened last week, and that religious censorship in Egypt has been on the rise.

All media reported that on Tuesday, Minister-Without Portfolio Matan Vilnai, calling himself the late Yitzhak Rabin's successor, announced his candidacy for Labor Party chairmanship. Vilnai criticized former PM Ehud Barak, saying that he had destroyed the party.

Jerusalem Post reported that, holding banners reading "Never Again" and "Israel Must Condemn," over 100 people gathered in front of the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem Tuesday to protest the use of gas chambers on political prisoners in North Korea.

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**11. Mideast:**  
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Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Rice will go to Israel and the PA Sunday, and two days later, Abbas and Sharon will meet. Now's the time for the 'half-full glass,' to highlight the relative quiet and not endanger it with a 'half-empty glass' approach."

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Ariel Sharon currently has a massive majority in the people, a real mandate to implement his disengagement plan. So where are Sharon's supporters?"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in Ha'aretz: "One can only hope that the calmer atmosphere Mahmoud Abbas has brought will also moderate the domestic debate [on demography] in Israel and at least prevent its deterioration into even worse forms of racism." Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "Sharon

will be obligated to accede to [Secretary Rice's] demands; the production line of rockets in Gaza cellars will increase and improve under the auspices of 'poor Abu Mazen's' mask." Extreme right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "What [Attorney-General Menachem] Mazuz is agreeing to is the acceptance of a discriminatory principle whereby Jews have no right to collectively own land for the benefit of Jews in the Jewish state."

Block Quotes:

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I. "Now's the Time for a 'Glass Half-Full' Approach"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (February 2): "A source in [Israel's] defense establishment described the dilemma now facing Israel following mortar fire in Gaza: On the one hand, the public wants quiet and is ready to close 'half an eye' to give the cease-fire a chance. On the other hand, Israel cannot give up the principle that the PA prevent attacks. The solution to the dilemma is also split into two: verbal pressure on the PA and restraint on the ground.... Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, meanwhile, is as suspicious as ever.... [Secretary] Rice heard [from senior Sharon aide Dov Weisglass] that Hamas could break the quiet any moment, but has been badly hurt by IDF actions, and is attentive to the public mood in the Palestinian street, which wants quiet. In other words, Hamas faces the same dilemma as Israel. The Palestinians also are tired of the fighting, want domestic and international legitimacy, and understand now is the time for some quiet. Thus the two sides continue their delicate dance. Sharon now needs public support ahead of the votes on the disengagement and the budget, and he needs American support ahead of the renewal of diplomatic talks with the Palestinians. The quiet is important for him to make goodwill gestures to the Palestinians, like freeing prisoners and dropping the list of wanted men. Rice will go to Israel and the PA Sunday, and two days later, Abbas and Sharon will meet. Now's the time for the 'half-full glass,' to highlight the relative quiet and not endanger it with a 'half-empty glass' approach."

II. "Why Does the Silent Majority Keep Still?"

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (February 2): "The residents of Judea, Samaria and Gaza [i.e. the settlers] did not succeed in 'settling in the hearts' over the years, and appear to be paying the price for their behavior and high handed attitude now in spades.... Along with many voters of Likud, the Labor Party, Meretz and other parties, Ariel Sharon currently has a massive majority in the people, a real mandate to implement his disengagement plan. So where are Sharon's supporters? Where is the silent majority that wishes for the implementation of disengagement? Experts will say that it is always easier to gather a crowd against something. People do not come to the square to support, only to oppose. True or untrue, this large public, silent and still, is leaving the floor open to intensive activity and growing influence by the settlers. This silent public does not budge from its easy chairs."

III. "Demographic Politics"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in Ha'aretz (February 2): "'Demography,' meaning anxiety about an Arab majority, has lately taken over the shaping of national policy.... The disciples of the 'demographic rationale' enjoy all possible worlds. They support withdrawal from the territories like the Left, and appear to be Arab haters like the Right. The 'security' Left turned into the 'demographic' Left during the Intifada. Between the suicide bombings and Arafat's speeches about millions more marching to Jerusalem, it was difficult to talk about the moral burden of the occupation and much easier to hope the Arabs simply would disappear. One can only hope that the calmer atmosphere Mahmoud Abbas has brought will also moderate the domestic debate in Israel and at least prevent its deterioration into even worse forms of racism."

IV. "In the Service of Words"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (February 2): "Elected PA leader Abu Mazen has nurtured great hopes following this statements against violence and

terror. For the time being, beyond words, words and more words, he does not intend to do anything at all that would fill those words with tangible contents.... The problem is the necessity for the government to make several gestures to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Rice, who will be arriving in the region, will demand that Sharon accede to Abu Mazen's demands, including a prisoner release, in order to please the post-Arafat Palestinian street, and to ease Abu Mazen's control of the complex environment in which he operates. Sharon will be obligated to accede to those demands; the production line of rockets in Gaza cellars will increase and improve under the auspices of 'poor Abu Mazen's' mask."

#### IV. "Mazuz Vs. the Jewish People"

Extreme right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (February 1): "Last Wednesday Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz did something unpardonable. He decided that the state can no longer abide by the law of the land. That law, the Basic Law for the Israel Lands Authority [ILA] from 1960 provides the legal basis for the ILA's administration of both state-owned lands and lands owned by the JNF [Jewish National Fund].... The JNF was founded at the dawn of modern Zionism for the purpose of raising money from Jews in the Diaspora and in Israel to buy lands in the Land of Israel for Jewish settlement. Its charter stipulates that JNF lands are to be used specifically for Jewish settlement.... What [the Israeli-Arab human rights organization] Adalah is demanding in its petition and what Mazuz is agreeing to is the acceptance of a discriminatory principle whereby Jews have no right to collectively own land for the benefit of Jews in the Jewish state.... In making this decision, Mazuz has not merely overstepped his authority. He has effectively seized the property of the entire Jewish people -- in Israel and throughout the world -- who have for the last 120 years been putting their dollars, rubles, francs and pounds into the blue [collection] boxes of the JNF. It is the responsibility of all Jews to protest against this discriminatory expropriation of our property."

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12. Iraq:  
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Summary:  
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Liberal columnist Tallie Lipkin-Shahak wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: 'America wishes to go through re-education in Iraq, to finally succeed ... to win [the war], but it is doubtful whether it can do so."

Block Quotes:  
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"Too Late"

Liberal columnist Tallie Lipkin-Shahak wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (February 2): "On the day when Iraq went to vote, President George W. Bush was unable to hide smiles of contentment that were subdued by concern of hard days to come. But the U.S. citizens weren't really excited. The number of dead, the economic cost, and the lies on the way to that celebration are heavier on their hearts. It looks as if, through its re-elected President, America wishes to go through re-education in Iraq, to finally succeed in merging its good intentions join its wider and even darker interests, or in other words, to win [the war], but it is doubtful whether it can do so."

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